

## FRENCH INDO-CHINA

reasons had reached Laos later than elsewhere, but was primarily stimulated by the economic importance of Laos's mines and town building in the post-war period. The modernization of Vientiane was especially notable, for it had been buried under the jungle, 400 kilometres from the sea, and on an almost unnavigable river. When the potential wealth of the country became evident, the administration began to veer from the Protectorate ideal to direct government, making *tabula rasa* of native institutions. Some Hanoi officials took it into their heads to suppress the King of Luang-Prabang as an obstacle to transforming Laos into a *bona-fide* colony. Varenne had the good sense to recognize how much the Laotians venerated their king, and so he rescued his throne from the assimilationist peril. The Protectorate was saved, and to push Laos farther along the trail blazed by Annam and Cambodia, a native advisory assembly was given to the country in 1929, and a mixed Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, both of which recently sent delegates to the *Grand Conseil*. The process can only fully develop when the rail and road network is completed—that administrative pipe-dream linking Laos to the rest of the Union—which in 1936 looked perilously near fulfilment. An unfortunate corollary is that the forty-year tariff freedom of Laos, a miracle in French colonization, died in 1932 with the growth of the Siamese and Indo-Chinese railroad construction. Justice has followed in the wake of the Laotian administration. At first it was left almost untouched, with Laotian codes and magistrates, even for the mountain peoples. In 1900 the Resident Superior Tournebise, made a first tentative translation of some Laotian laws, but he found them so incomplete and so poorly organized

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 temporarily abandoned. In 1908 SaHe, a Saigon  
 magistrate, took up  
 the task. Beginning with the kingdom of Luang-  
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*three* codes of ciril and criminal law and procedure.  
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 were discovered, which necessitated more study from  
 1917 to  
 1922, another code was promulgated. It was this  
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 A modified version was put out in 1928, but the  
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